

Mercury in the home.

Mercury pollution is a serious problem across the Northeast. Even tiny amounts of mercury can cause serious health problems for people and wildlife. Mercury comes from a number of sources, including the products listed below that may be found in your home. If you throw these products in the trash, outdoors or down drains, the mercury they contain can pollute the environment. Call 1-866-9MERCURY to learn how to dispose of these products safely and responsibly.

Thermometers (fever, candy, deep fry, oven, indoor and outdoor)

Thermometers are one of the largest sources of mercury in municipal solid waste. The few drops of mercury found in a common fever thermometer have the potential to contaminate a huge number of fish. Fortunately, consumers can purchase accurate alternatives such as digital or alcohol thermometers.

Fluorescent Bulbs

Though all fluorescent bulbs contain mercury, their use is encouraged because they are highly energy efficient. Keep them out of the trash, avoid breakage and dispose of them at a household hazardous waste collection program.

Thermostats

Thermostats contain more than five times the amount of mercury in a typical fever thermometer. If you replace a thermostat, dispose of the old one through a household hazardous waste collection program. Mercury-free electronic or digital thermostats are available as replacements.

Pharmaceuticals, Detergents and Disinfectants

Mercury can be found in some topical disinfectants, such as Mercurochrome, Tincture of Merthiolate and older medications for psoriasis and eczema. It is also found in some over-the-counter nasal sprays, hemorrhoidal ointments and contact lens products. Some bleaches, detergents with bleach, stain removers and soaps also contain mercury. Read product labels and try to purchase mercury-free alternatives.

Other sources of mercury in homes

- batteries made before 1990
- button batteries, like those found in watches, calculators and hearing aids and some toys
- pilot lights in gas appliances such as stoves, water heaters, furnaces, washers, dryers and heaters
- switches found in some fire alarms, septic tanks, car trunks, pinball machines and automatic shut-off irons
- latex paint and pesticides made before 1990
- miscellaneous: counterweights in antique clocks, jewelry with glass ampules, older chemistry sets, vintage toys and pre-1997 athletic shoes with flashing lights.

To learn more about safe handling, proper disposal and product alternatives, call 1-866-9MERCURY or visit mass.gov/envir/mercury.htm.

Stop mercury from rising.

Brought to you by the Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs and Department of Environmental Protection.

1-866-9MERCURY

1-866-963-7287